

HORSING AROUND: A SUPPRESSED CELTICISM IN A FRAGMENT OF HELVIUS CINNA'S POETRY*

ABSTRACT

This article argues that the text of a hendecasyllabic fragment of Cinna, transmitted by Aulus Gellius, is defective, and that a neglected conjecture made by the sixteenth-century scholar Gyraldus gives a better reading, mannis, a loanword from Cisalpine Gaulish, may be the first usage of this word in Roman literature. Furthermore, reading mannis allows for the recognition of echoes of Cinna's poem in the elegies of Ovid and Propertius. While Gellius definitely read nanis (since he builds an entire chapter around the reading), a palaeographical corruption in Gellius' text of Cinna is simple to explain, although conjecture cannot be dismissed. The article shows the danger of linguistic biases in texts which transmit fragments: in this case, a bias towards reading Greek loanwords in place of those from Celtic languages.

Keywords: Cinna; Gellius; Cisalpine Gaulish; *poetae noui*; fragments; Transpadane Gaul; *nanus*; *mannus*

FPL⁴ Cinna fr. 9:¹

at nunc me Genumana per salicta
bigis raeda rapit citata nanis

1 genumana Ψ : Cenumana J. Gronovius

2 citata Fy : citana δ nanis Ψ : mannis L.G. Gyraldus

For *nanis*, read *mannis* ('ponies'). *mannis* is a conjecture made by Gyraldus in 1545, and repeated several times by different early modern scholars.² But this conjecture is not

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¹ Identical text is printed in FPL⁴ (J. Blänsdorf, *Fragmenta poetarum Latinorum epicorum et lyricorum* [Berlin and New York, 2011⁴]), FRP (A.S. Hollis, *Fragments of Roman Poetry c. 60 BC–AD 20* [Oxford, 2007]) and FLP² (E. Courtney, *Fragmentary Latin Poets* [Oxford, 2003²]). The sigla are according to the *signa codicum* offered by L. Holford-Strevens, *Auli Gelli Noctes Atticae* (Oxford, 2020).

² Attributed to Scriverius by Hertz and Baehrens, but the conjecture already appears at L.G. Gyraldus, *Historiae poetarum tam Graecorum quam Latinorum dialogi decem* (Basel, 1545), 1094. The conjecture is mentioned without attribution at H. Stephanus, *Fragmenta poetarum ueterum Latinorum, quorum opera non extant* (Geneva, 1564), 413, and was also later offered by N. Heinsius but without his endorsement, owing to the conflict with the Gellian chapter ('nisi Gellii obstaret auctoritas, malletm . . .'): see P. Burmannus, *Publii Ovidii Nasonis opera omnia*, 4 vols (Amsterdam, 1727), 3.536 (NB the printing error of a repeated page 536).

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to be found in the apparatus criticus of any of the recent editions of Cinna's poetry, that is, in *FPL*⁴, *FRP*, or *FLP*², nor in the apparatus criticus of any other editions of the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, nor for that matter in any edition of Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* (the fragment's citing text) since the nineteenth century. The conjecture was last reported, for the text of Gellius, in Hertz's (1883–5) edition of *Noctes Atticae* and, for the text of Cinna, in Baehrens's (1886) edition of the fragments of the Roman poets. The conjecture is cogent and deserves what the early modern scholars did not give it: a defence. I argue that serious consideration should be given to adopting this conjecture into the text of Cinna's fragment in future editions, for two reasons: (i) the linguistic status of *mannus* as a loanword from Cisalpine Gaulish; (ii) adopting *mannis* restores the place of Cinna's fragment in the Roman literary tradition.

The Cinnan fragment is quoted at the end of a chapter of Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* (19.13) defending the Latinity of the word *nanus* ('dwarf').³ The chapter narrates a conversation, overheard by Gellius, between the orators M. Cornelius Fronto and M. Postumius Festus and two grammarians, C. Sulpicius Apollinaris and another individual merely referred to as a friend of Fronto (*Frontonis familiari*, 19.13.4). The quotation from Cinna is the only one given in the chapter.

The Gellian chapter begins with Fronto asking Sulpicius (19.13.2) if he is right to prefer using the word *pumiliones* to the word *nani* when referring to human beings with dwarfism, given his belief that the word *nanus* is colloquial (*sordidum*) and barbarous (*barbarum*). Sulpicius tells Fronto (19.13.3) that on the former count he is correct, but not on the latter, *since nanus* derives from the Greek νᾶνος.⁴ At this point Postumius intervenes, enquiring of the anonymous grammarian whether 'the use of the word by the common folk to describe mules and little horses' (*de mulis aut eculeis humilioribus uulgo dicitur*, 19.13.4) is a valid usage in good Latin and, if so, in which author it could be found. Fronto's friend then points to the Cinnan usage.

The chapter's narrative, given that Postumius' question asks for a specific author, is clearly constructed around the Cinnan quotation and Gellius' desire to defend the use of *nanus* with a transferred meaning for small, domesticated equines, that is, mules or ponies. This means that *nanis* must have stood in Gellius' own copy of the Cinnan lines. But this would be the only instance in extant Latin literature in which *nanus* is used of an animal rather than a human being.⁵ Likewise, the Greek noun νᾶνος is used of human beings with dwarfism, not of animals.⁶ Therefore, *nanis* is likely a corruption introduced

³ Gellius mentions *nanus* in an earlier chapter as a word used by Laberius in place of *pumilio*, the established Latin word for 'dwarf' (16.7.10).

⁴ On the tripartite division *Latinus Graecus barbarus*, see A. Garcea and V. Lomanto, 'Gellius and Fronto on loanwords and literary models: their evaluation of Laberius', in L. Holford-Strevens and A. Vardi (edd.), *The Worlds of Aulus Gellius* (Oxford, 2004), 41–64, at 44–50.

⁵ Cf. *TLL* 9.1.46.59–47.28. One of the only two usages (the other attested in Athenaeus, see n. 6 below) of either *nanus* or νᾶνος for anything other than a human being is for a kind of water jar, mentioned by Varro and Festus, as the transliteration (*cum Graeco nomine*, *Ling.* 5.119) of its Greek name (i.e. νᾶνος), apparently so-called because it was 'short and curved' (*humilem et concauum*, Paul. Fest. 185). When Pliny talks of dwarfism in animal species, he uses *pumilio*, not *nanus* (cf. *HN* 10.156, 11.260, 12.13, 17.176): see C. Panayotakis, *Decimus Laberius: The Fragments* (Cambridge, 2009), 122.

⁶ Cf. e.g. Lycoph. *Alex.* 1244; [Longinus], *Subl.* 44.5; Ptol. *De iudicandi facultate et animi principatu* 12.3 (Lammert page 18). Aristotle seems to confine his usage of νᾶνος to human beings with dwarfism, as distinct from animals with dwarfism: see e.g. *Hist. an.* 577b26–7 ὅσπερ ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οἱ νάνοι (human dwarfs are compared to the offspring of the crossing of a mule and a mare, οἱ γίνουσι); cf. [Pr.] 892a6–7, where a specific question about the origin of dwarfism in human beings, in which νάνοι is used (διὰ τίνα αἰτίαν οἱ νάνοι γίνονται;), is widened to a general question about dwarfism in human beings and animal species where the term μικρά is used (ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον

into the Cinnan lines between the time Cinna published his poetry and the preparation of the *Noctes Atticae*, a corruption which Gellius makes into exemplary usage.

There is another word, palaeographically close to *nanus*, which refers to an equine animal. *mannus*, ‘pony’, is a loanword from the varieties of the Celtic languages spoken in Cisalpine Gaul.⁷ The palaeographical confusion would be even simpler if *nanmus* were occasionally found as an alternative form for *nanus* as νάννος is for νάνος, so that a scribe could mistake *mannis* for *nannis* rather than *nanis*.⁸ We find *mannos* for *nan(n)os*, the corruption in the other direction, in a ninth-century manuscript (Parisinus lat. 1661) of Arnobius’ *Aduersus nationes*.⁹ *mannis* would only be distinguished from *nannis* by a single extra stroke in the *capitalis* script, the common bookhand between the time of Cinna and Gellius.¹⁰ However, one cannot rule out conjecture. We may hypothesize that a Greek-speaking scribe, unfamiliar with the word *mannus*, might mistakenly emend his exemplar to the visually similar and more familiar word *nan(n)us*.¹¹ We can compare how in Latin manuscripts *canthus* is often found for *cantus* (‘wheel rim’, ‘circle’, a loanword from Gaulish), most likely under the influence of the semantically unrelated Greek word κανθός (‘corner of the eye’, ‘eyelid’).¹² Regardless, Gellius (like Cinna’s modern editors) might be expected to know better, since Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* is quoted by him five times (1.304, 2.1153–4, 4.223–4 [identical to 6.929–30], 4.528–9, 6.1275) and in that work the word *mannos* appears at 3.1063.¹³

καθόλου, διὰ τί τὰ μὲν ὅλως μεγάλα, τὰ δὲ μικρά;); cf. also *Part. an.* 686b2–26. The lexicographical writers continue Aristotle’s distinction in their entries on γίννος/ίννός, where they make the same analogy that γίννοι, as stunted (κολοβοί) offspring, are to horses as νάννοι are to human beings (cf. Phot. *Lex.* ι 138 ἴννος; *Suda* ι 385 Ἴννοι; [Zonar.] s.v. Ἴννοι [Tittmann page 1109]). Athenaeus (646c) refers to a bread called νάνος, the only other extant use of *nanus* or νάνος for something inanimate. However, words derived from νάνος were used of animals. A scholiast uses νανούδιον of a Maltese puppy, but notes that νάνος is used of humans (ἔστι γὰρ ὑποκοριστικὸν τοῦ νάνος· νάνον δὲ τὸν μικρὸν φασὶν ἄνθρωπον, schol. ad Clem. Al. *Paedagogus* 3.30.2 [Stählin page 337]). The adjective νανώδης is used by Aristotle both of animals (see *Paru. nat.* 467a32; *Part. an.* 686b3–23, 689b25, 695a8) as well as of humans (see *Paru. nat.* 453a31, 453b6, 457a22–4; *Part. an.* 686b25; *IA* 710b13). νανοφύς is used by Aristophanes (*Pax* 790) of human dancers.

⁷ *mannus* is described as a Gaulish loanword by Consentius: cf. *Gramm. Lat.* 5.364.8–10 Keil. The linguistic evidence supports a sound change from */nd/ in Proto-Celtic to /nn/ in Cisalpine Gaulish (and Late Lepontic): see further J. Uhlich, ‘More on the linguistic classification of Lepontic’, in P.-Y. Lambert and G.-J. Pinault (edd.), *Gaulois et celtique continentale* (Geneva, 2007), 373–411, at 384–93. On Gaulish *mandus*, see X. Delamarre, *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise: une approche linguistique du vieux-celtique continental* (Paris, 2003²), 215. That *mannus* referred to ponies is made clear by Porphyry’s comment on Hor. *Carm.* 3.27.7 (Meyer page 114): *manni equi dicuntur pusilli, quos uulgo burichos uocant* (‘very small horses are named *manni*, which the common folk call *burichi*’).

⁸ All the principal manuscripts read νάννοι twice at Arist. *Hist. an.* 577b27–8; at [Pr.] 892a6, Laurentianus gr. 87.4 (Bekker’s C^a) has νάννοι. νάννος/νάνος may be a babble-word formed by hypocoristic gemination: see E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik* (Munich, 1939), 1.422–3; R. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden, 2010), 995.

⁹ *Adu. nat.* 3.14. Arnobius’ text survives otherwise only in a single copy (Brussels KBR 10846–7) of this same manuscript. It was corrected to *nanos* in the *editio princeps*.

¹⁰ On the *capitalis* script, see B. Bischoff, *Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1986²), 78–85, with the chart at 88, which illustrates the similarity between M (a double-lambda shape composed of four strokes) and N (like M, but without the fourth stroke). For examples of the mistake, cf. Plaut. *Mil.* 739, *domi* doni A; *St.* 182, *me* ne A.

¹¹ For examples of the interference of Greek in Latin caused by biliteracy, see J.N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003), 494–7, 509–11, 519–21.

¹² Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 1.5.8 *cantus* against Pers. 5.71 *canthum*: for Gaulish *cantos* and Greek κανθός, see Delamarre (n. 7), 105 and Beekes (n. 8), 635–6, respectively.

¹³ On Gellius’ ignorance of Gaulish and other languages apart from Greek or Latin, see L. Holford-Strevens, *Aulus Gellius: An Antonine Scholar and his Achievement* (Oxford, 2003²), 322–3. On Gellius’ quotation of Lucretius, cf. Holford-Strevens (this note), 219–20; D. Butterfield, *The Early Textual History of Lucretius’ De rerum natura* (Cambridge, 2013), 53.

Gellius himself complains about misguided corrections by editors in the era between the first century B.C. and his own day, such as the erroneous reading of *stetisses* for *stitisses* circulating in copies of a speech of Cato the Elder.¹⁴ And Gellius regales us repeatedly with ancient critics supporting their readings with manuscripts of alleged authority, such as at 1.21, where Julius Hyginus claims to have seen *sensus* ... *amaror* at Verg. *G.* 2.247, instead of *sensu* ... *amaro*, in a manuscript supposedly discovered in Virgil's house.¹⁵

Regardless of whether one reads *nanis* or *mannis*, one matter must be corrected, which is that *bigis* in Cinna's line should be read as an adjective rather than a substantive modified by an adjectival *nanis* as previously suggested.¹⁶ This contracted form is indeed almost always found in our extant texts as a substantive (*bigae*), but there is an extant usage in Manilius which shows that it could be used adjectivally, in conformity with its original identity as an adjective.¹⁷ There is no attested instance (other than in the Cinnan fragment as previously interpreted) where either *nanus* in Latin or *νᾶνος* in Greek is anywhere used as an adjective rather than a noun.¹⁸ Therefore, given that *bigis* could be understood by a Roman audience as adjectival, in a choice between which noun to take with it, *nanis* or *mannis*, *mannis* seems easier: 'twin-yoked ponies' rather than 'twin-yoked dwarves'.

Reading *mannis*, which—like *raeda*—is a Celtic loanword, rather than *nanis*, a borrowing from Greek, suits Cinna's geographical focus on Gallia Transpadana (*Genumana per salicta*) in these lines.¹⁹ It also establishes the Cinnan fragment as a counterpart to several passages from the Roman literary tradition describing swift chariots drawn by *manni*: Lucr. 3.1063–4; Hor. *Epod.* 4.14, *Carm.* 3.27.6–7, *Epist.*

¹⁴ Gell. 2.14.2 *recte quidem ille 'stitisses' scripsit; sed falsa et audaci emendatione editores 'e' scripto per libros 'stetisses' fecerunt, tamquam 'stitisses' uanum et nihili uerbum esset*. Ironically, *falsa et audaci emendatione editores* is H.J. Müller's reading for the corrupt reading of the manuscripts, *falsa et audax emendatores*.

¹⁵ See further L. Holford-Strevens, "And by the bitter taste disclose the ground" (Gell. I 21 on Verg. *Georg.* II 246f.), *Eikasmos* 11 (2000), 309–34.

¹⁶ Cf. L.C. Watson, 'Cinna and Euphorion', *SIFC* 54 (1982), 93–110, at 99: '[*nanis*] functions anomalously as an adjective'; Watson parallels this with Euphorion's use, condemned by Hermogenes, of personal names as adjectives (ἀρτιά [from Ἀρτιάς] δῆμον ... χεῖρ ἱπποδάμεια <v> [from Ἱπποδάμεια], fr. 123 Lightfoot), but this etymological play with proper nouns by Euphorion is not the same phenomenon as Cinna's supposed adjectivization of a common noun; cf. also Courtney (n. 1), 221: 'The word *nanus*, meaning "dwarf", is used adjectivally with *bigis*'; Hollis (n. 1), 41: 'As a noun, "nanus" is applied to dwarfs', i.e. elsewhere than *FPL*⁴ Cinna fr. 9.

¹⁷ Manilius 5.3 *quadriugis et Phoebus equis et Delia bigis* ('and Apollo with his four-yoked horses and Diana with her two-yoked horses'), which also highlights that *bigae* and *quadrigae* were understood by the Romans themselves as contracted forms of the adjectives *biugae* and *quadriugae*, with *equae* understood: cf. Priscian's explicit comments (*Gramm. Lat.* 2.126.21–4 Hertz). However, *biugae* may well be a back formation, with the contracted form *bigae* deriving from an earlier stage in Proto-Italic (*bīgae* < **dwi-jug-ā*): see M. de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages* (Leiden, 2008), 71.

¹⁸ No attributive usages of either *nanus* or *νᾶνος* are attested. Arnobius (*Adu. nat.* 3.14) juxtaposes *nanos* with two adjectives expressing size, *nanos medios longos*, but within a list of both nouns and adjectives describing physical characteristics (*ergo esse dicendum est quosdam capitones cilunculos frontones* ...), where all the words are being used substantively.

¹⁹ On Cinna's form *Genumāna*, see A. Grilli, 'Sul nome dei Galli Cenomani', *Maia* 37 (1985), 245–7. Although the initial *Genu-* instead of *Ceno-* is an oddity, we should remember that Cinna is writing poetry for a Roman audience and may well have preferred a variant ethnographic form current in the contemporary Roman context (cf. the variant manuscript reading *Genumanhorum* at Cic. *Balb.* 32) to faithfully reproducing an endonymic ethnonym of the Cenomani according to the pronunciation and orthography of their own language and script. On Cinna's use of loanwords, see Watson (n. 16), 97–8.

1.7.77–8; Ov. *Am.* 2.16.49–50; Prop. 4.8.15–16. Of these, Ovid closely echoes Cinna: *paruaque quamprimum rapientibus esseda mannis | ipsa per admissas concute lora iubas* (*Am.* 2.16.49–50).²⁰ The close relationship between the Ovidian and Propertian lines (Prop. 4.8.15–16) has been noted, but we have overlooked the Cinna lines as the common parent to these siblings.²¹ And while we cannot be sure of the relative chronology of the Cinna fragment and Lucretius' poem, there is the distinct possibility, if the lines were written in Cinna's youth, that Gellius was not wrong that Cinna did indeed introduce a word from another language into Latin literature, but it was from Cisalpine Gaulish, not Greek, and the word was *mannus*, not *nanus*.²²

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²⁰ *rapientibus* $\approx$ *rapit*, *essed* $\approx$ *raeda*. The parallel with Ov. *Am.* 2.16.49–50 was already noted by Heinsius, reported by Burmannus (n. 2), 3.536. *essed* is a loanword from Gaulish: cf. Delamarre (n. 7), 167.

²¹ Cf. J.C. McKeown, *Ovid: Amores*, 4 vols; 3 (Leeds, 1998), 364: 'It does not seem possible, however, to establish whether Ovid was influenced by, or influenced, the Propertian elegy.' J. Hudson, *The Rhetoric of Roman Transportation* (Cambridge, 2021), 202 points out that *mannis* appears in the same position in both the Propertian and the Ovidian hexameter lines, i.e. the final foot, but both would seem to look back to Cinna's hendecasyllable. The literary relationship between the Cinna fragment and the Ovidian and Propertian poems will be discussed further by Francesco Busti in a forthcoming monograph on Cinna.

²² For recent defences of the traditional dating of the publication of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* to the mid 50s B.C., see K. Volk, 'Lucretius' prayer for peace and the date of *De rerum natura*', *CQ* 60 (2010), 127–31 and C.B. Krebs, 'Caesar, Lucretius and the dates of *De rerum natura* and the *Commentarii*', *CQ* 63 (2013), 772–9. They argue against the suggestion of G.O. Hutchinson, 'The date of *De rerum natura*', *CQ* 51 (2001), 150–62 of 49 B.C. as a *terminus post quem*. Catullus' description of the *Smyrna* as nine years in the making (Catull. 95.1–2) would put Cinna as composing poetry at least by the 60s B.C.: T.P. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet and other Roman Essays* (Leicester, 1974), 49–50 suggests publication of the *Smyrna* in 56 or 55 B.C., with Cinna beginning its composition in 65 or 64 B.C. after returning to Rome from Bithynia.